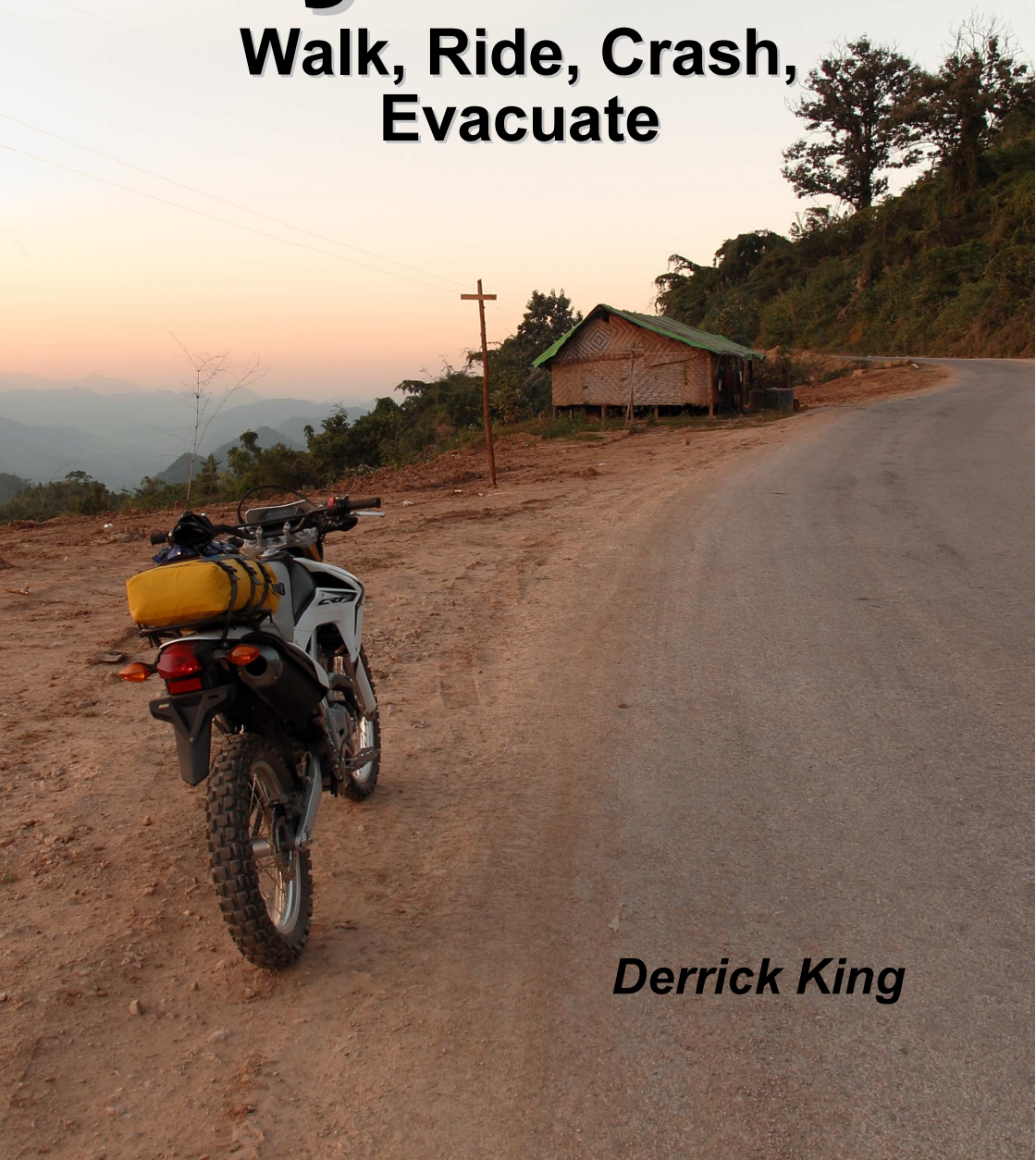


Myanmar

Walk, Ride, Crash,
Evacuate



Derrick King

Myanmar

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Evacuate

Derrick King

*Myanmar –
Walk, Ride, Crash, Evacuate*

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*Front Page: One Hour North of Kalaw
Back Page: Nepalese Resting Place Viewpoint*

Myanmar

Walk, Ride, Crash, Evacuate

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Walk

Introduction

In December, 2012 I joined Eric of Myanmar Motorcycle Tours and another customer, Gus, for a ten day ride around northern Myanmar—just the three of us. Organized group tours like this had just become possible but independent travel was still in the future. I crash-landed on my head after a few days with the engine shut off, putting myself out of action and risking my life in the Shan countryside. Evacuation to Singapore took two painful days. Here's the delightful start and agonizing ending, with photos of Yangon, Mandalay, and Shan states ... and inside a Myanmar hospital.

The Itinerary:

Day 1: Fly to Yangon

Day 2: Sightsee Yangon

Day 3: Fly to Mandalay

Day 4: Ride to Kalaw

Day 5: Ride to Paoh Village

Day 6: Fly to Yangon

Day 7: Fly to Singapore

Yangon

Motorcycles are not allowed in the city, so Day 1 was on foot. The architecture, smells, and sounds of Yangon are like Mumbai—no surprise, since the British ran India from 1858 to 1947 and ran Burma from 1824 to 1948. From 1885 to 1937 Burma was a province within British India.



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But the people on the street are most definitely Asian, not Indian.



Birds and satellite dishes are everywhere:



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Yangon traffic is completely devoid of motorcycles.



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Yangon police do not look friendly:



Sugar cane drink vendors are friendlier, and do good business:



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Book binding the old way:



Book binding the new way:



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The scene reminds me of Colombo 25 years ago:



Uncles in sarongs enjoy tea on the street:



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Monks enjoy tea on the street too:



A portable hot-food restaurant serving Burmese tofu salad:



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And a portable restaurant nearby serving Burmese style chendol for desert:



Preparing a betel nut chew, just as in India:



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Transportation:



Distribution:



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I found a KFC restaurant in Yangon:



Think how heavy that stick must be across her shoulder:



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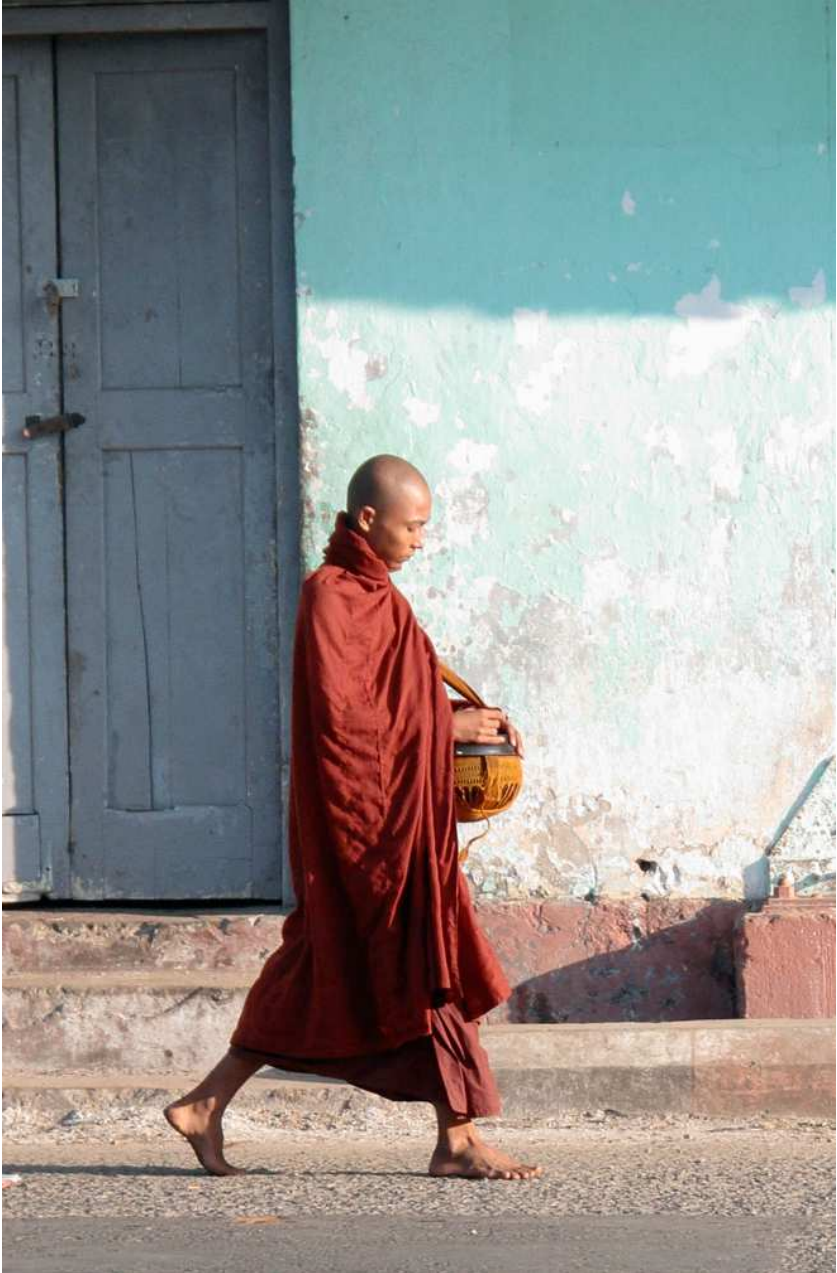
This man did not like my camera at all:



Not everyone is poor—those at the top of the system do very well:



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Thanaka

The girls love thanaka wood paste on their cheeks, a natural cosmetic:



It not only is attractive, it protects the skin from the sun:



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Most Myanmar women use thanaka:



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Thanaka and a good cigar:



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Even some men wear thanaka:





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But not everyone wears thanaka:



Yangon Fish Market

Day 2 included an early-morning walking tour of the Fish Market, Yangon's tourist attraction number two:



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No part of the fish is wasted—imagine the smell.



The boss is not paying attention while Eric and I take her photo:



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Doing the books:



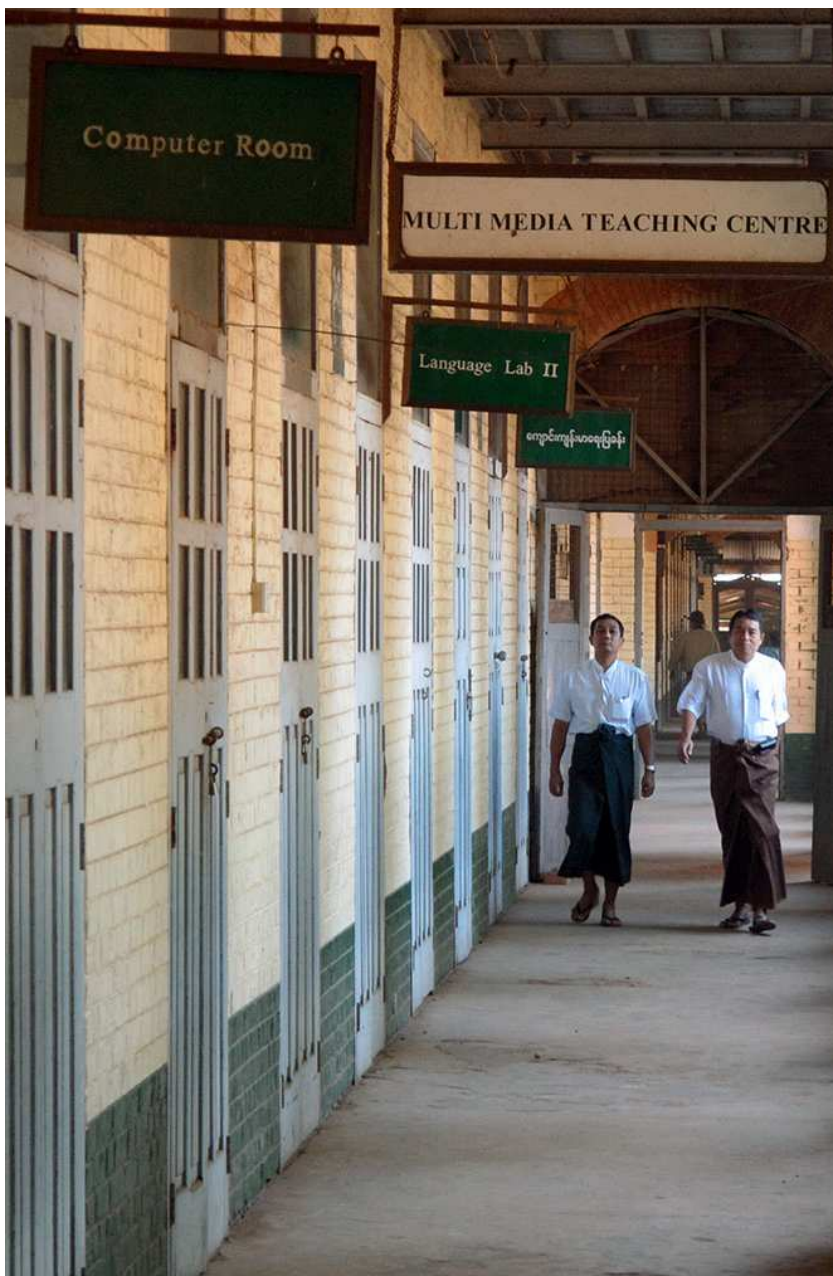


Yangon Lanmadaw School

Lanmadaw School, established 1864 for boys, turned coeducational over a century later in 1991:



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Yangon Central Women's Hospital

Yangon Central Women's Hospital, founded 1897:



The delivery room:





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One of the wards (photography not allowed):





Yangon Shwedagon Pagoda

Prime tourist attraction: the gilded pagoda, impressive from near or far, by day or by night.



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Mandalay

On day three Eric and I flew to Mandalay to meet Gus. The day was spent on foot, based from the Mandalay Hill Resort, the best hotel this trip.



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The Royal Palace:



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Around Mandalay



A sleepy sort of place:



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Applying thanaka:



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Women seem to do much of the work:

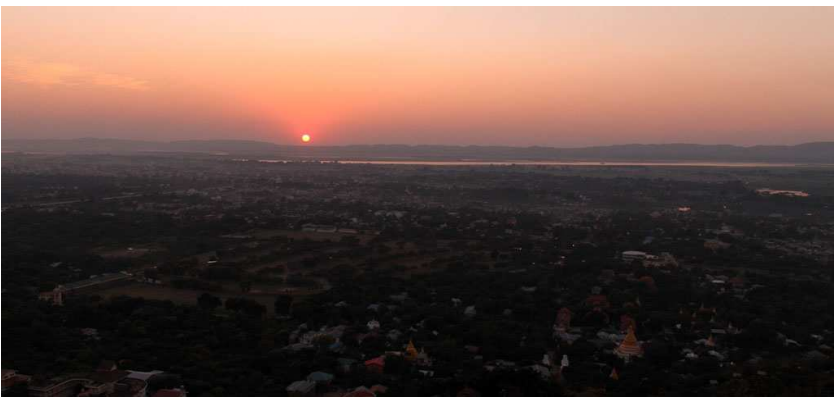


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Sunset from Mandalay Hill—a long walk uphill from the town:



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Ride

Kyaukse

Adventure awaited us on day four. The Thai Honda CRF250Ls were new.



Our first petrol stop:



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Kyaukse Technological University:



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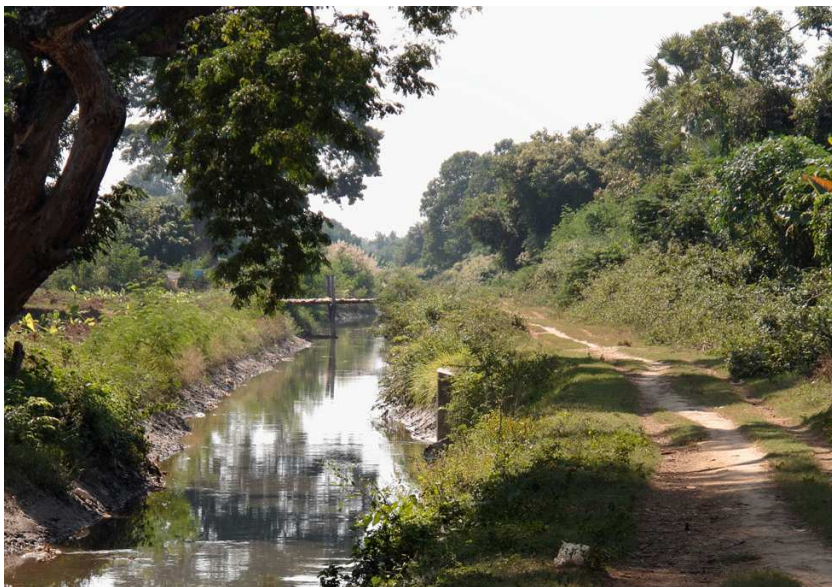
Our riding was, as much as possible, on local trekking trails and oxcart roads around the rice paddies and in the mountains. No cars at all.



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Whenever we stopped on the large (by local standards) motorcycles, we attracted onlookers.



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Electric fishing—stunning the fish with an electric current:



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We weren't riding through the scenery; we were part of it. A photo shot from the trail on the seat of the motorcycle:



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A Village Rest Stop



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We ate fruit from her stall, but she would not let us pay for it:



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I would like to know what was on his mind—look at the story in his face:



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Gus gave a lesson in Spanish. The children loved it:



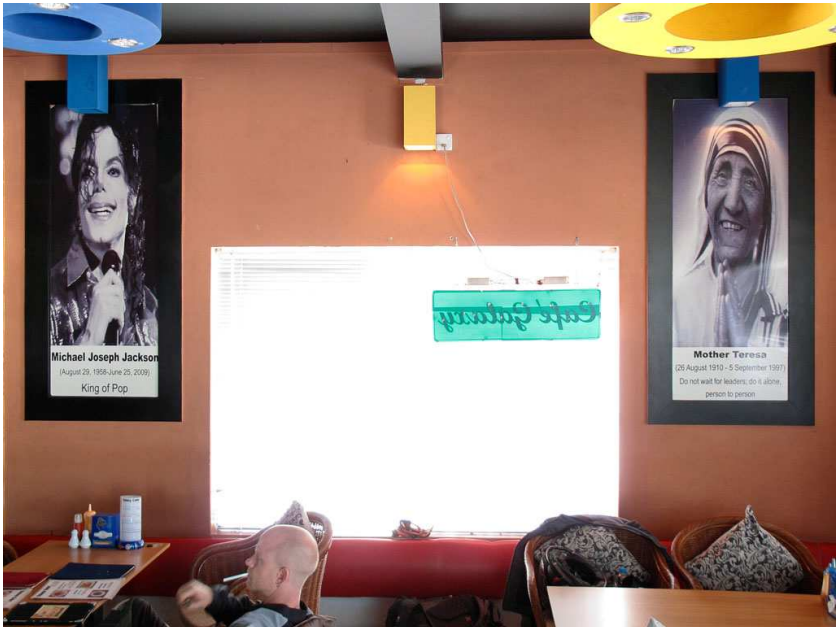
Meanwhile Eric gave a different kind of lesson. The adults loved it:



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Kyaukse's Galaxy Café, dedicated to Michael Jackson and Mother Teresa:



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Some Myanmar petrol stations serve refreshments—civilized:



Flying cow dung from the motorcycle in front was a technical hazard:



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Five kilos of luggage in a waterproof kayak bag was enough for two weeks:



The evening ride to Kalaw was wonderful.



Myanmar – Walk, Ride, Crash, Evacuate

Roadside café:



The main highways had large, deep potholes, but the traffic was light.



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Bliss:



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The Kalaw Dream Villa (1-Star) Hotel:



This poster of Aung San Suu Kyi would have been illegal two years before:



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Dinner at Sam Family Restaurant and Trekking Guide Service in Kalaw:



Breakfast in the hotel on day five:



Kalaw

Khun Tun Ti is the founder of this boarding school for poor children (to which we made a donation) and the owner of the restaurant and trekking guide company above. He was our local guide for the dirt backroads of Kalaw, and my god-sent helper for two days after the crash later that day:



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Students in the school kitchen:



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The shoes arranged neatly and tidily outside the door of the school:



Myanmar – Walk, Ride, Crash, Evacuate

Studying in the dormitory:



Myanmar – Walk, Ride, Crash, Evacuate

The common study room:



Myanmar – Walk, Ride, Crash, Evacuate

Around Kalaw. Many of the vehicles are still ancient.



Myanmar – Walk, Ride, Crash, Evacuate



Myanmar – Walk, Ride, Crash, Evacuate



Myanmar – Walk, Ride, Crash, Evacuate

It gets chilly at night in Kalaw:



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Refilling fuel and checking the tires and drive chains before heading out:



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Fuel supplies inside the petrol station:





Nepalese Resting Place

Back on the oxcart highway. It was a challenge to stay upright in the mud.



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Local traffic—all motorcycles:



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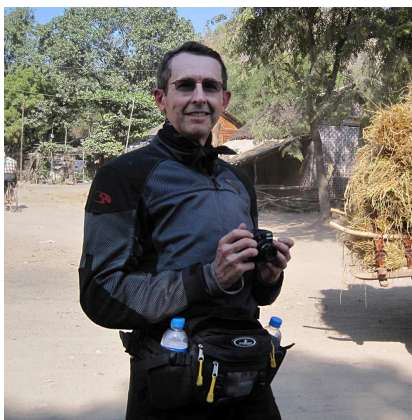


I figured I'd slip and fall for sure, but I didn't; the knobby tires were great.



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Photographing vistas would—literally—be my downfall:



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Myanmar – Walk, Ride, Crash, Evacuate

Snack time at the “Nepalese Resting Place” Viewpoint:



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The toilets had a wonderful, relaxing view.



Palaung Village

We made a brief stop, with respected Khun Tun Ti welcomed as interpreter.



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A few years ago, these people had never seen a foreign face. Now they receive trekkers every day, some staying overnight. Cycle and motorbike-tourists pass by once a week. Tun Ti brings trekking business to the village, but there is no tipping and interaction with the tourists is genuine.

Threshing time:



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Eye-watering chillies are an important crop in the area. Note the thanaka:



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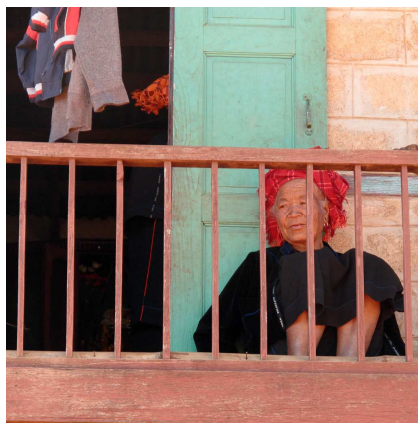
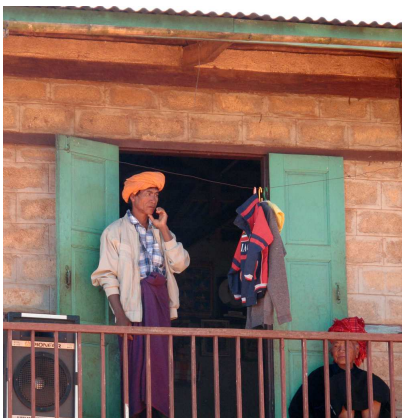
Paoh Village Wedding

A Paoh village on the trail. We were the only foreigners, of course.



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We entertained them ... and they entertained us.



Myanmar – Walk, Ride, Crash, Evacuate



Myanmar – Walk, Ride, Crash, Evacuate



The wedding was an all-day affair with people coming and going, giving blessings and gifts, and receiving snacks and smokes.



Myanmar – Walk, Ride, Crash, Evacuate



Myanmar – Walk, Ride, Crash, Evacuate



Myanmar – Walk, Ride, Crash, Evacuate



The groom and bride on the left, and a well-wisher:



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Khun Tun Ti, Eric, and Gus giving blessings:



The village mayor in blue:



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The village elder—Number One Man:



The village elder's wife—Number One Woman. Full of life, character, poise, and grace ... and enjoying a good betel chew as we packed up to leave:



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The last photo of me in one piece, moments before I went over the side:



Crash, Evacuate

Down, Head First

I stopped on the trail shortly after leaving the wedding to take a photo while my two companions rode on ahead. In the previous photo note the drop-off on the right of the bike and how close I am to the verge, about a meter and a half. There was no reason to stop near the edge because we were on a trail and there was no traffic, but that was an old habit from civilization. I'm tall enough to put my feet on the ground on any machine.

I shut off the engine and put my right foot down but there was a hole in the road and my foot felt nothing but air. I felt myself falling to the right. The bike fell over without any damage at all. But this is where I was launched:



As the bike tipped over it catapulted me head-first down the embankment. My feet came to rest two meters lower than the bike and my head landed about a meter lower than my feet. My upper body was injured as I smashed down on my head and back from a height of ten feet or so.

As I came down I heard a *snap!* as my collarbone was shattered by the force of it landing on the bottom of my helmet chin bar as I landed upside down, and then a *thud!* as my body slammed down on my back protector.

Myanmar – Walk, Ride, Crash, Evacuate

Had I not been wearing the Schuberth J1 helmet, I might not have broken my clavicle; I might have broken my neck. Had I not been wearing this Dainese “Ninja Turtle” safety suit under my mesh jacket, I might have broken my spine:



I lay on the ground unable to breathe. I was suffocating but with much effort I managed to gulp a few short gasps, accompanied by gurgling sounds; my right lung was collapsing but I wouldn't know that for two days. I was alone in silence. No one knew I was there, but I knew the bike was lying on the side of the trail and Eric and Gus would eventually return. After slowly gaining limited, painful breath I tried moving all the parts of my body. I could not move my right arm but with my left hand was able to remove my helmet. I was afraid the motorcycle might fall on me, so little by little I used my uninjured feet to push myself farther down the hillside, with my head still lower than my feet.

I lay there for about ten minutes, according to my GPS data, unable to sit up. Eventually I heard a bullock cart. When it got closer, I yelled as loudly as I could, which was a low moan. I heard the farmers talking and then I saw their faces looking down at me from up on the hill. Shouting to each other they scrambled down the hill and tried to help me to stand up, but I howled in pain. Of course they spoke no English but they did everything they could to help the strange foreigner. Eventually, slowly, the farmers helped me to sit up until Eric returned about 15 minutes after the crash.

Myanmar – Walk, Ride, Crash, Evacuate

Eric made a sling to support my broken collarbone. He helped me to stand up, and we found a track up the hill back to the trail. But how to travel about four kilometers on a very bumpy trail to the nearest paved road? On the back of Eric's Honda, with good suspension but with only one arm to hold on? Or on the back of a bullock cart, with no suspension (and wood-and-steel wheels) but resting on large sacks? I opted for the bullock cart and sacks. Eric and the two farmers lifted me onto the car and off I went.



Within seconds I was groaning and crying out in agony as the ends of my broken bones ground together and further lacerated my lungs. But I couldn't shout over the noise of the rattling bullock cart wheels to tell the drivers that I was in pain. After what seemed like an eternity, but was five minutes according to the GPS data, I got them to stop. Eric arrived after a few minutes and carefully lifted me off the cart and onto the back of his

Myanmar – Walk, Ride, Crash, Evacuate

Honda for the rest of the ride to the trailhead at Bawningon junction. Eric and Khun Tun Ti arranged transportation using a mobile phone. Close-up of the crash site and bullock cart ride—as rural as rural can be:



It took several hours for the truck Khun Tun Ti called to arrive at the junction, and by then it was dark. Eric, Gus, Khun Tun Ti, and the bullock cart drivers never left my side. Marijuana and Paracetamol were the only medications on hand so—medicated and smiling—we waited for the truck.



Myanmar – Walk, Ride, Crash, Evacuate

Eric sent me off with Khun Tun Ti, who would stay with me until Yangon airport check-in two days later. The truck is behind the oxcart in this dim photo, with the Honda and Khun Tun Ti in the back:



Eric and Gus rode off under the stars for the monastery lodge some 40 km distant, with only their weak motorcycle headlights to guide them. This was both a sacrifice and risk on their part. They arrived at midnight under a sky full of stars. Gus later told me it was by far the most unforgettable ride of the trip, and sent me the photos I have included in Appendix B.

I traveled 5 km in that truck sitting in the front seat going only 30 km per hour to make the potholes less painful, and then 75 km in a Toyota taxi with softer suspension going slightly faster. The journey to the hospital took two painful hours, as the medication wore off.

Taunggyi Tun Hospital

We drove to Taunggyi Tun Medical Center, said to be the best private hospital in Shan state and where the generals go for treatment.

The service was prompt and they did their best with their limited resources. All the doctors and most of the nurses spoke English well. Myanmar is more like India than Asia when it comes to English fluency.

Myanmar – Walk, Ride, Crash, Evacuate

The emergency ward where I was admitted:



The waiting room:



Myanmar – Walk, Ride, Crash, Evacuate

The doctor on duty, an orthopedic surgeon, shouted “Oh my God!” when I removed my shirt, which was unprofessional, to say the least. Here’s what my collarbone, now in five pieces, looked like to the vintage Toshiba X-ray machine, operated by a matron in a shabby brown overcoat.




The doctor recommended I return to Singapore immediately for surgery, but only with a helper, without whom I could not lie down, get up, pay bills, get food and water, or carry a bag. He gave me a “Fit to Fly” certificate:

To Whom It May Concern:

Date - 12.12.2012

This is to certify that Mr. Derrick King
is on his /her way to Singapore. for further
medical check up. He/She is doing well for the time being and fit
to travel by air.

Remarks: He needs a helper while
travelling from Taunggyi to Yangon.


Dr. B. B. S. M. Med. Sc (Ortho.)

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Even though, unknown to me, my right lung wasn't fit to fly, I was able to go home as soon as possible for treatment and surgery. The hospital's discharge report listed my blood pressure and pulse—which were never measured—as normal and also said there was no pneumothorax (collapsed lung), which was wrong—but the hospital did not have an oximeter.

Whenever it was time for Tramadol pain killer, Khun Tun Ti had to go downstairs to the pharmacy, buy it with cash, and bring it to the nurses waiting in my room.

The hospital pharmacy:



Even the X-rays and my arm sling had to be paid for in advance with cash. If you don't have cash and a helper in Myanmar, you are in deep trouble.

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The nurses were friendly and their needles were new; only their gentle latex-gloved hands touched my buttocks.



But there seemed to be more receptionists than nurses.



Myanmar – Walk, Ride, Crash, Evacuate

The room has a helper's bed as well as the patient's bed. This is because the nurses only provide medical support; the helper has to go out and bring back water, food, and toilet paper and help the patient to sleep and wash. My hospital room and Khun Tun Ti:



The view of Taunggyi from my room on day six:



Myanmar – Walk, Ride, Crash, Evacuate

The corridor in front of my room, the nurses station, and the ironing lady:



Myanmar – Walk, Ride, Crash, Evacuate

The outside of Taunggyi Tun Medical Center:



The day after the accident we flew to Yangon and took the closest good hotel to the airport, to minimize the pain and further injury from driving on potholed roads. The hotel was \$350 but when you are in agony, you will

Myanmar – Walk, Ride, Crash, Evacuate

take whatever you can get. The night in Taunggyi hospital—including injections, three X-rays, and medication—was only \$150.



Dear Valued Guests,

Welcome to the Savoy Hotel Yangon!

We would like to inform you that due to no credit card system in Myanmar, the room payment for the entire stay must be made in full.

Thank you for your understanding.

Your Savoy Team

Dear Guests,

please be informed that when making a telephone call; the charging system in Myanmar is quite different to your home country.

In Myanmar the charges start once the phone is ringing, regardless whether the call is answered or not!

therefore please be aware that should the call no be answered in a short time, in order not to make the call too expensive, please hang up.

It was exhausting and painful to climb the hotel stairs using one lung, which I had to do only once thanks to room service, paid for in advance.

That last night in Yangon was absolute torture. Lying on my back pressed on the broken ribs, squeezed my punctured lung, and ground my clavicle fragments together. I could not move at all when I was laid down to sleep. As a result I ended up with pressure sores on my lower back like a quadriplegic, which took a week to heal.

In the morning of day seven it took three men to get me out of bed by lifting the end of the mattress until I was vertical. A doctor told me later that it was very dangerous for me to have slept horizontally and I should have slept in a sitting position to avoid further lung damage. Khun Tun Ti and I took a taxi to the airport where I was wheelchaired onto the plane. Business class was full, but Singapore Airlines put me in the bulkhead seat with a vacant seat on each side. I flew home, and was wheelchaired by

Myanmar – Walk, Ride, Crash, Evacuate

Singapore Airlines staff through immigration, baggage claim, and customs and out to my wife, who rushed me to Mount Elizabeth Hospital in a taxi.

Singapore Surgery

In Singapore my blood oxygen was measured and was too low. I was rushed into a CT scan, which revealed a collapsed lung. I was given morphine and was comfortable for the first time in two days. At first the doctor thought I would need a skin graft because the broken bone had nearly poked out through the skin and was killing it, but surgery was in time to save it.



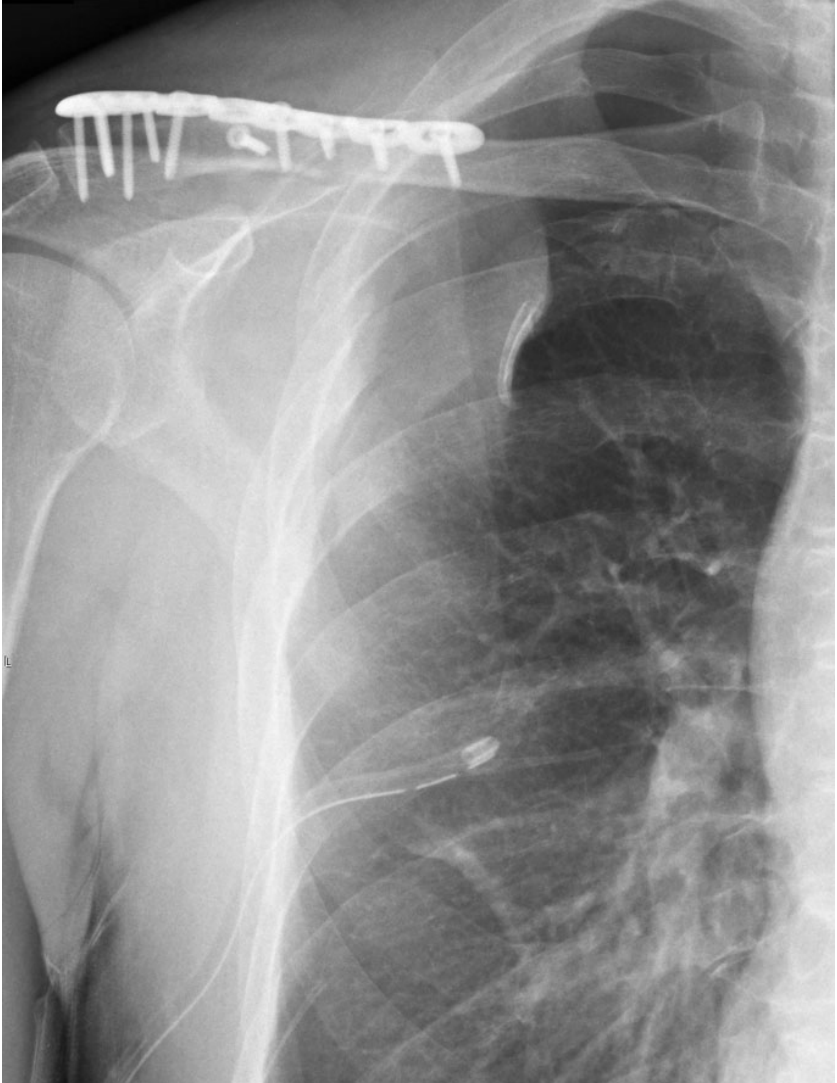
While I was high a chest tube was inserted with a tool that looked like an ice pick. I could feel it grinding its way through my chest but felt no pain.



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A few hours later—more than 48 hours after the crash—I was in surgery for over two hours. It is amazing how much damage you can do to yourself with your engine shut off, while standing still!

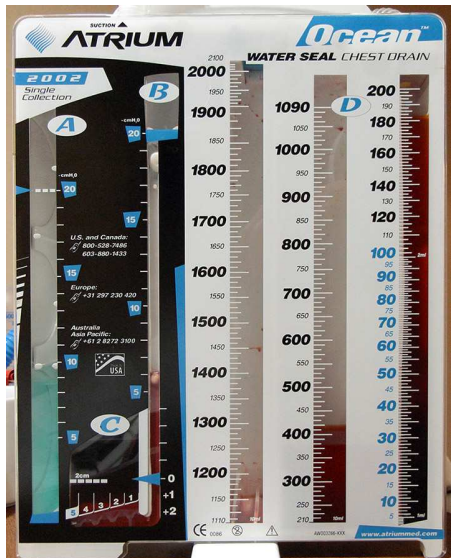
My titanium clavicle, ten screws, and the chest tube:



The ghostly comma shape is the end view of a broken rib.

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A few days later:



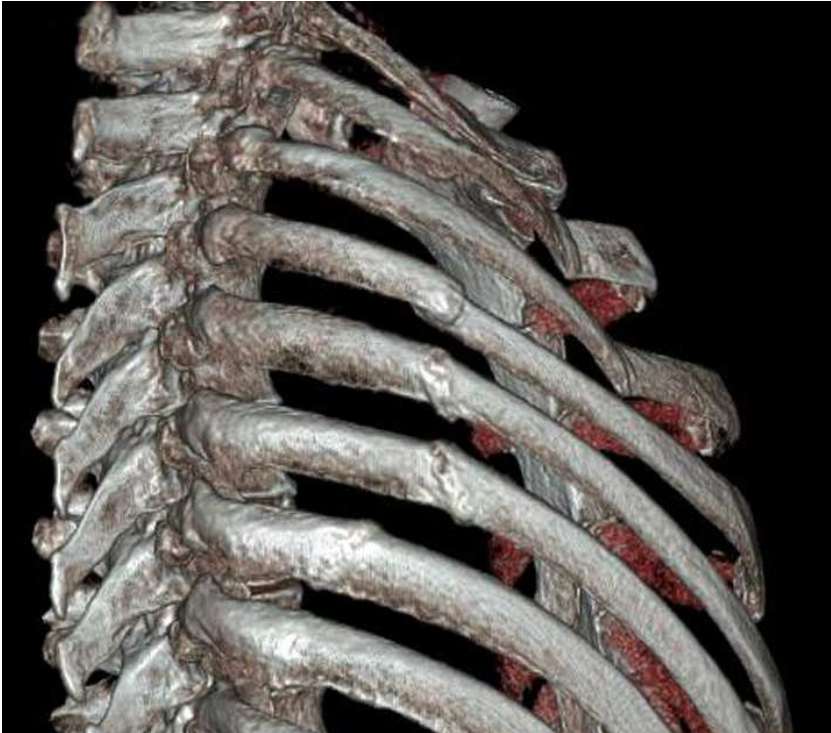
400 ml of fluid was drained from my right lung over several days, about the volume of a bottle of Myanmar Lager. The chest tube was removed and I was discharged after six nights.

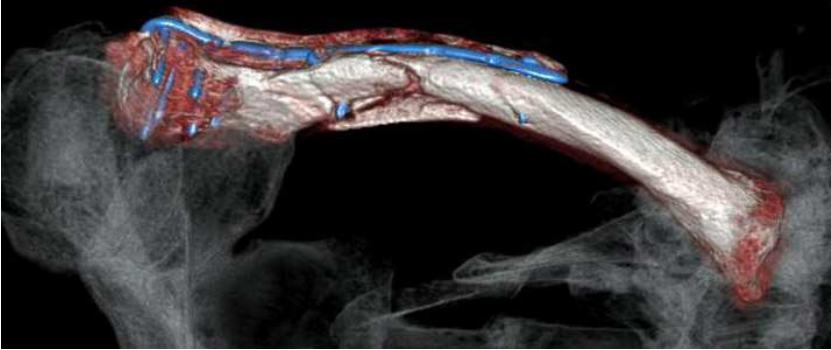
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This baggage tag from Heho airport near Taunggyi made me chuckle, painfully, every time I saw it. Recovery took many painful months. My pneumologist warned me not to Scuba dive again because pneumothorax scar tissue will never be as stretchable as normal tissue and breathing air at four times atmospheric pressure causes unnatural stress on points of weakness. One bubble to the brain, expanding as the diver surfaces, is fatal. I asked the doctor what the symptoms are. He said, first you get chest pain. Then you pass out. Then it's up to the care you receive. "You want to risk your life to see fish?"

Recovery and Afterthoughts





I count my blessings. I was not far from a wheelchair, or a coffin and the Darwin Awards; another meter of height or a descent onto a rock could have paralyzed or killed me. What would have happened if I'd had this accident riding solo? I would probably have died.

Lessons learned:

- Watch where you put down your foot, and stay away from the edge of the road! I didn't pay attention to my foot—I was looking at the view. After 300,000 street motorcycle kilometers I am appalled by the mistake I made while dirt-biking.
- Have travel insurance. My travel claim came to US\$32,000, most of which was eventually paid (I had AIG TravelGuard Premier). I did not have to use my domestic hospital insurance.
- Keep detailed records. One of the reasons for taking so many photos after the crash was to assist with the claim if necessary. I photographed the Fit-to-Fly certificate in the hands of the doctor in front of the hospital sign, just in case. Khun Tun Ti understood, and collected chits for me for everything.
- Phone the insurer's toll-free emergency number as soon as possible after the accident, write down the name of the operator you are speaking to (for the claim later), ask him for instructions, and follow them. Fortunately AIG advised me to get the Fit-to-Fly certificate from the hospital in Taunggyi, otherwise I would have been turned away from the plane at Yangon—I was asked to show the certificate when I checked in.
- In Myanmar, have at least an extra US\$1,000 in crisp new \$100 bills hidden away to pay for emergency care.

Myanmar – Walk, Ride, Crash, Evacuate

- Have the local contact numbers for your airline with you. I learned the hard way that Singapore airlines does not put the Myanmar contact number on their tickets or on their website. Their Singapore call center number could not be reached from Taunggyi using IDD or Skype; it could only be reached using the Myanmarese equivalent of Skype but the keypad function did not work so I kept getting “invalid keyboard entry” recordings and could never reach a human. Two painful hours later I discovered the Singapore Airlines Yangon phone number from a local travel agent.
- Wear your safety gear even riding on slow back roads.
- Don’t ride in the back of a bullock cart if you have broken bones.
- Avoid wearing a bulky belt bag while riding. I was wearing this one with the camera in it (sitting on the table):



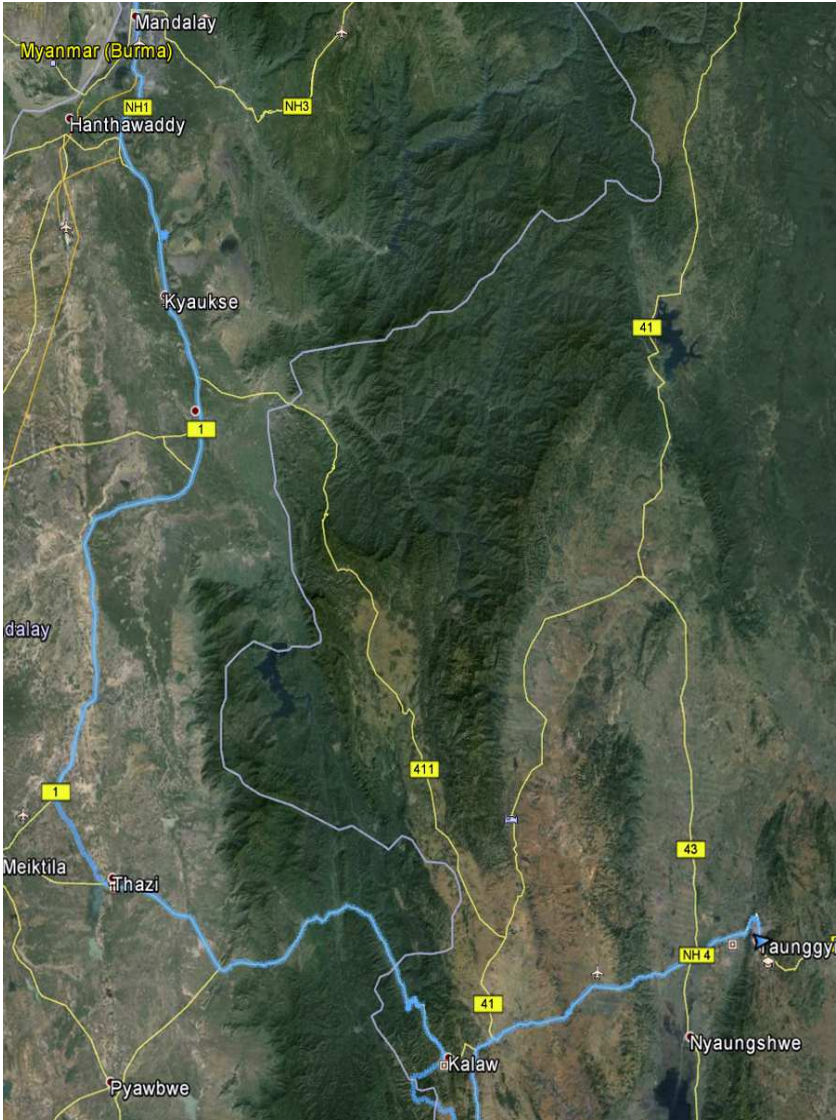
... but fortunately I had swung it around to the front moments before I fell over. If the camera had been strapped behind me when I crashed on my back, I might have snapped my spine on it.

A year after the accident I had a physical exam, including spirometry and a treadmill stress test. The spirometry and treadmill results were both slightly better than before the crash. The head of the Singapore Hyperbaric and Diving Medicine Center issued a “Certificate of Fitness to Dive.” I have made 25 dives since then to 20 meters in Thailand, Cambodia, and Borneo.

There is still a dent in my chest and my collarbones are not the same shape ... but I can breathe, ride a motorcycle, and dive ... and I have a titanium friend who goes with me wherever I go.

Appendices

A. The Route by GPS



From Google Earth, recorded by Garmin.

B. What I Missed in Hospital: Photos from Gus



C. AIG Travelguard Claim Process: 4.5 Months

The settlement time was 4.5 months. If I had known then what I know now, I could have cut the processing time in half. Everyone at AIG is friendly, but in the claims department there is no momentum. Here is the log, counted from the date of the submission.

Claim -15 Days: I had a serious accident in Myanmar.

Claim -14 Days: I called the toll-free AIG number from Taunggyi, advised them of my accident, got the operator's name, and received his instructions, which I summarize as "Get to a hospital that can treat you as best you can and keep the receipts. If your condition is not life-threatening you must take public transport. Don't forget to get a Fit-to-Fly certificate before you go to the airport." They would do nothing to assist with a non life-threatening evacuation. The fact that I was able to talk to him on the phone in gasps meant that my condition was stable.

Claim -7 Days: I was discharged from hospital in Singapore.

Claim Day: I called my AIG agent to inform him about my accident.

Claim + 5 Days: The agent came to my house and took my claim and receipts for scanning. I was too weak to scan them myself.

Claim + 8 Days: The agent emailed me to say that he sent the claim for scanning and processing.

Claim + 14 Days: I emailed the agent. The agent replied that "AIG would not take long approving it."

Claim + 15 Days: The agent emailed me scanned copies of the original documents, a 103 page PDF.

Claim + 20 Days: I emailed the agent. A huge credit card bill was due.

Claim + 22 Days: AIG sent me a letter (1) asking for the receipts that were already given to the agent, and (2) informing me that my surgeon was sent a query. I informed the agent.

Claim + 26 Days: I emailed the agent. The agent responded that "they will be in touch once there is news."

Claim + 76 Days: I made several attempts over a week via the call center to speak with the AIG adjuster to find out the status. The call center staff were friendly but had no information. After two missed returned calls I

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spoke with the adjuster, who said the surgeon had not replied to their letter sent two months previously. I asked him if he had sent a reminder or received any acknowledgement from the doctor, and he said no; he would wait indefinitely. Processing had stopped. I called the surgeon, who said he had not received any letter from AIG. I called the adjuster, and asked for letter to be faxed to the surgeon. I provided the fax number. The adjuster faxed the letter to the surgeon. The surgeon replied to the fax the same day, and later showed me the fax; it had just four or five basic questions.

Claim + 97 Days: The agent emailed two questions concerning a rubber stamp on a \$120 invoice (put there by AIG—the scanned copy does not have this stamp); the other concerning an interim statement which was superseded by a final statement. I emailed the answers. The agent acknowledged receipt of the answers.

Claim + 124 Days: I called the call center. I realized I should have bypassed the agent a long time ago. The call center returned my call to say that the two questions answered above had still not been answered! I decided to visit AIG *in person* every Monday until the claim was paid.

Claim + 125 Days: I visited the AIG customer service center and gave two customer service agents printouts of the same answers given to the agent. They promised me an update in a few days. They said that these should be the last queries and they expect that my claim will now be processed.

Claim + 131 Days: They never updated me as promised so I visited the customer service center again. The receptionist said that the questions were still outstanding! The same customer service agents reappeared and said that the computer was not updated, and the status should really be “in process.” They explained that the process for claims over \$2,000 is slow.

Claim + 134 Days: I received a letter that my claim had been approved, except for some taxis; a prepaid-but-missed \$300 hot air balloon flight in Bagan; the airfare (which I had not expected them to reimburse, but the agent said to claim); and all expenses more than 30 days after the accident.

Claim + 138 Days: I visited the AIG customer service center again and explained the unpaid items to the same two customer service agents.

Claim + 139 Days: The adjuster agreed to include the taxi fare but not the rest, as these are not insured. After 4.5 months I received a cheque.

If I had not chased my claim, it would never have been paid.

Adventure Riders' Comments

I uploaded this story to *Horizons Unlimited* and *Adventure Rider* website journals, receiving over 8,000 views. Here are excerpts from posted replies:

Damn dude. Nice pictures. I haven't seen many ride reports from this area.
Good stuff. *Swamp*

I'm happy that you healed up pretty well. Some great lessons learned the hard way. Looked like you were well prepared. The photo's and story were great, sorry your trip was cut off short but sure could have been a lot worse.
Thank you. *McGee*

That happened to me once. Not off a cliff though. Great pics! *Infoatnmmoto*

Ouch- Could have been much worse. I fell in a similar manner, but even with full protection, landing on my head caused a compression fracture of my T5. Fortunately healed up fairly well. *Bikenstitches*

Fantastic photos. Sorry to hear about your accident. I broke my right clavicle in three parts too, so welcome to the titanium club! I would venture to guess quite a few inmates have had similar injuries due to riding motorcycles. I had a pulmonary embolism as a result of my ortho surgery and not being put on blood thinners as a precaution. Apparently, this is a standard medical procedure around the world. That was more serious than the fracture. You will recover and be good as new and back in the saddle again ...! *HankGS*

You managed to have both incredibly bad and incredibly good luck. I'm glad that AIG paid the insurance claim. I have had nothing but bad things to say about them ever since they stranded my sick girlfriend in Nepal. If they came through for you maybe they are changing for the better. You took some great photos, and your "lessons learned" is invaluable. Thanks for posting! Glad you eventually got your claim sorted. Keep on healing and riding! *Blader54*

Thanks for the glimpse into a place that many don't get to see. Interesting comparison between India and Myanmar. Looks like the English left a few tea pots behind too. Glad you recovered, and great tips for Med evac. *Bgunn*

Enjoyed your pictures. Sorry to hear about your crash. Get well and hopefully you can return and finish your ride report. *Comrade Art*

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Thanks for posting, it's a timely reminder that things can go wrong, and so easily. You have my commiserations and we have the opportunity to learn from your misfortune, so thanks again for sharing. Also, thanks for posting your photos of Myanmar, its scenery and it's people. I look forward to following in your footsteps, well, not exactly in your footsteps, but close enough. All the best. *Mark*

Wow. What a ride report. Great photos man, some are worthy of National Geographic. Really felt pretty rough reading the crash portion. Very glad you're OK. If you compensated your helper, would AIG have covered that I wonder? Thanks for posting. *Blatant*

I had an accident in Portugal in which I suffered severe concussion, bleeding on the brain, broken ribs, punctured lung and a broken collarbone. I didn't get/or lost vital documents/receipts etc so when it came time to claim 3rd Party I discovered I didn't have vital bits like doctors reports/x-rays/accident report numbers/registration details/driver of other vehicle name etc ... so no claim! Moral of the story, do not bump your head so hard that you can't remember any details of accident or consequences thereafter. *SteveDW*

Absolutely fantastic pictures, except the one on the oxcart. The look on our face says it all; what a shame your adventure was cut short by such an unfortunate accident, but, at least you are on the mend, and it could have been worse! Despite all the hassles with AIG you'd purchase coverage from them again ... I wonder if there are other companies that might be worth looking at? Ride on! *TonyBKK*

Awesome pics and would love to visit there. Sorry about your injuries and glad you healed up OK. *SteveD57*

Your pain wasn't wasted. I just wanted you to know that your story has passed on to others and is doing some good. My daughter leads uni groups on trips for their PhD studies. She leaves tomorrow with 12 youthful ladies to Burma. Your idea of keeping all records, air line numbers, and medevac numbers as well as other records of costs, will aid her efforts. Your ideas are some I would never have thought of. Like you said, the infrastructure is very reminiscent of India. Normally she has used credit cards, this time she is taking cash, new USD \$100. She and I enjoyed your report and pictures. Thank you. *Dgeezer*

What a difference a year makes! We had no problem finding ATMs in Yangon, and managed to pay with credit cards at most hotels in Yangon, Bagan, and Mandalay. Your advice about cash still stands for anyone going to Myanmar

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though, the whole situation is so changeable. I had no idea you could ride as a foreigner in Myanmar ... it's got me thinking. I'm sorry you had to go to such extreme lengths to experience Burmese hospitality! It's that business of not riding. Like I tell my wife, I've never once hurt myself while riding a bike. Walking, on the other hand ... dangerous stuff! *Woosha*

Glad it all worked out well for you in the end, nice ride report. *WesleyDRZ400*

I was in Yangon on business for a month in 1999. It seems a lot has changed and a lot stayed the same. Fantastic RR. Glad you healed up ok! *Jisei*

I first read of your experiences a year or so back. It had a significant impact on me, as did the subsequent experience Eric had in Cambodia with a broken leg. My kit now includes Endone and Targin (and a doctor's letter to cover it) because of what you went through. Thanks for the full report. *The BigFella*

Ride report with a twist, if an unfortunate one. Whilst on a ride in the Cardamom mountains my friend had a fairly bad crash, he was trucked back to Phnom Penh and was taken to what was said to be the best Thai run hospital there. After \$700 for checkup and x-rays he was told just bad bruising. When he returned to Australia x-ray revealed 2 broken ribs! *Gavo*

Wow, great pic's and story. Reminds me of both my trip to Myanmar and my dislocated clavicle. *Roknrich*

Phew, close call. The weirdest shit happens. In the pictures it doesn't even look like you are that close to the edge. I'm glad it turned out OK in the end. Thanks for sharing. I read a report about a guy who tumbled down a cliff with his bike while trying to take a picture at the side of the road. Similar to your accident and I remember very severe injuries. Since reading that, I have been a lot more mindful where I stop. Not just how close I am to the edge, but also how well people can see me from behind. Thanks for sharing the lessons learned. *Boarder*

Ouch, thanks for sharing. Lessons learned and taken on board. *NearlyHomelessNick*

Thanks for sharing your story, amazing the way a simple photo stop led to such misery. Really enjoyed your fantastic photographs. *Jaws100*

Thank you much for sharing your story! Glad that nothing more happens! The pictures remind me of my Laos trip. - I wish I could do Myanmar. *Surfy*

